

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Georgia



photo: USFWS

Mature longleaf pine habitat.

photo: USFWS

Riparian buffer fence.

photo: USFWS

Streambank restoration.

Introduction and General Description

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program is a voluntary program to assist private landowners with wildlife habitat restoration and improvement on their land. Georgia is the biggest state east of the Mississippi River in size and more than 90% of the land in Georgia is privately owned. Therefore, the future health of Georgia's land, water, and wildlife depends upon private landowners.

In Georgia, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has worked with landowners to restore habitat since about 1995. Projects are focused in watersheds where conservation efforts will provide the greatest benefit for federal trust species which include: migratory birds, anadromous (migratory) fish, and threatened and endangered species. Projects include restoring longleaf pine habitat, the restoration of degraded streams and riparian areas, and the restoration and improvement of endangered, threatened, and rare species habitat. Since 1995, approximately 400 private landowners have restored or enhanced about 15,000 acres of wildlife habitat through the Partners program in the state.

Georgia Activities

- Longleaf pine ecosystem restoration.
- Stream bank stabilization and restoration.
- Restoration of riparian and flood plain areas.
- Exotic invasive species control and management.
- Restoration, enhancement, protection of habitat for threatened, endangered, or rare species.

Habitats of Special Concern

The longleaf pine ecosystem once covered an estimated 90 million acres in the Southeastern U.S. Today, less than 3 million acres remain (over 97% decline), mostly in the Coastal Plains of the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas. Over 30 plant and animal species associated with longleaf pine ecosystems are threatened or endangered, including the red-cockaded woodpecker, flatwoods salamander, hairy rattlesnake, and the eastern indigo snake. Other rare plant and animal species that are associated with longleaf pine habitats include the sandhills rosemary, Pickering's Morning-glory, Bachman's sparrow, and gopher tortoise.

Threats

Habitat loss is the greatest threat facing wildlife habitat in Georgia today. Georgia's population has grown to over 9 million people in 2010, up 18% from a decade ago. As a result, thousands of acres of wildlife habitat are lost each year to accommodate the expanding human population.

Some of these threats to wildlife and habitat include: residential and commercial development including road construction, loss of habitat, lack of implementation of best management practices (BMPs) on agricultural and forestry lands, conversion of forest stands to slash and loblolly pine plantations, and lack of prescribe fire, and the influx of exotic invasive species.

Conservation Strategies

In order to achieve the goal of increasing wildlife habitat, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in Georgia has developed a strategic plan to help guide its restoration efforts. This plan was developed using information from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Georgia Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS), and with input from several partners.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

This plan emphasizes focus areas, focus species, and focus streams, while building partnerships with private and public entities, and promoting voluntary conservation.

Some of the focus areas for these projects include the Conasauga and Etowah Rivers in North Georgia, the Flint River and Spring Creek in West Georgia, and the Altamaha River system in Southeast Georgia. Costs of these projects generally range from \$1.25 to \$4.50 per linear foot.

Georgia has about 62 species of federally listed endangered and threatened species and many more state listed and rare species. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has assisted landowners with projects that restore and enhance habitat utilized by these rare species.

For example, the Partners program in Georgia has assisted landowners in restoring and enhancing nesting and foraging habitat for the endangered wood stork. Some projects have included assisting landowners in obtaining fish for foraging ponds, creating or enhancing wood stork feeding ponds, and controlling undesirable understory vegetation in wood stork nesting ponds.

Partners

Georgia Forestry Commission
Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors
Natural Resources Conservation Service
The Nature Conservancy
The Longleaf Alliance
The Conasauga River Alliance
Etowah River Alliance
Limestone Valley RC&D
Seven Rivers RC&D
Golden Triangle RC&D
Chestatee- Chattahoochee RC&D
Upper Suwannee River Watershed Initiative
Spring Creek Watershed Partnership
Upper Chattahoochee River Keeper



Nesting wood storks.

University of Georgia
Auburn University
Farm Services Agency
Glynn County Board of Commissioners
City of Jesup
City of Lakeland
City of Douglas
Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy
U.S. Forest Service
City of Chickamauga
Stephens Co. Soil & Water Conservation District
Wayne County School Board
Walker County Board of Education
Appling County Middle School
Tattnall County High School
Gordon Central High School
Georgia Conservancy
Sandy Creek Nature Center
Elachee Nature Science Center
Emanuel County School Board
Douglas County
City of Alpharetta
Floyd College
Dade County
Oconee County
Ware County
Morgan County
Brantley County
Bacon County
Darton College
Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
South Georgia Youth Park
Project Orianne
Cherokee Tribe of Georgia
Private landowners

Accomplishments

- Since 1995, wildlife habitat on private lands has been restored, or enhanced, or protected on over 400 Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects.
- The Partners Program has restored or enhanced over 13,500 acres of longleaf pine habitat.
- Approximately 134 miles of stream and riparian habitat have been restored or enhanced.
- About 30 federally endangered and threatened species have benefited from projects in some way.

Future Needs

- Restore and enhance 3,500 miles of stream and riparian habitat.
- Restore and enhance approximately 5 million acres of longleaf habitat.
- Work with private landowners and others to enhance and restore rare species habitat on about one million acres throughout the state.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Assistance Contacts:

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West Georgia Office: 706/544 6428

Coastal Georgia Office: 912/832 8739